HAMLET

Jonathan Goad

Support for the 2015 season of the Festival Theatre is generously provided by
Claire & Daniel Bernstein

Production support is generously provided by
Drs. M.L. Myers & the late W.P. Hayman, Jane Petersen Burfield & family, Esther & Sam Sarick in honour of Antoni Cimolino, Barbara & John Schubert and Catherine & David Wilkes
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THE STRATFORD STORY

That Stratford, Ontario, is the home of the largest classical repertory theatre in North America is ultimately attributable to the dream of one man, Stratford-born journalist Tom Patterson.

In the early 1950s, seeing the economy of his home town endangered by the withdrawal of the railway industry that had sustained it for nearly 80 years, Patterson conceived the idea of a theatre festival devoted to the works of William Shakespeare. His vision won the support not only of Stratford City Council and an enthusiastic committee of citizens, but also of the legendary British actor and director Tyrone Guthrie, who agreed to become the proposed festival’s first Artistic Director. The Stratford Shakespearean Festival of Canada was incorporated as a legal entity on October 31, 1952. A giant canvas tent was ordered from a firm in Chicago, and in the parklands by Stratford’s Avon River work began on a concrete amphitheatre at the centre of which was to be a revolutionary thrust stage created to Guthrie’s specifications by internationally renowned theatrical designer Tanya Moiseiwitsch.

From the balcony of that stage, on the night of July 13, 1953, actor Alec Guinness spoke the opening lines of Richard III: “Now is the winter of our discontent/ Made glorious summer by this sun of York.” Those words marked the triumphant end to what had sometimes seemed a hopeless struggle against the odds to turn Patterson’s dream into a reality – and the beginning of an astonishing new chapter in Canadian theatre history. The other production of that inaugural six-week season, a modern-dress version of All’s Well That Ends Well, opened the following night, confirming the opinion of celebrated novelist Robertson Davies that the new Festival was an achievement “of historic importance not only in Canada, but wherever theatre is taken seriously – that is to say, in every civilized country in the world.”

Time proved the truth of Davies’ words, for the Festival’s pillared, porticoed thrust stage revolutionized the performance of classical and contemporary theatre in the latter half of the 20th century and inspired the design of more than a dozen other major venues around the world, including the Guthrie Theatre in Minneapolis, the Beaumont Theatre at Lincoln Centre and, in England, the Chichester Festival Theatre, the Crucible Theatre in Sheffield and the Olivier Theatre at the Royal National Theatre in London. Over the years, the Festival has made some amendments to the original design of Moiseiwitsch’s stage, without changing its essential format.

At the end of the 1956 season, the giant canvas tent that had housed the Festival’s first four seasons was dismantled for the last time to make way for a new and permanent facility to be erected around
Designed by architect Robert Fairfield, the new building would be one of the most distinctive in the world of the performing arts: its circular floor plan and crenellated roof paying striking tribute to the Festival’s origins under canvas.

In the years since its first season, the Stratford Festival has set benchmarks for the production not only of Shakespeare, Molière, the ancient Greeks and other great dramatists of the past, but also of such 20th-century masters as Samuel Beckett, Bertolt Brecht, Anton Chekhov, Henrik Ibsen, Eugene O’Neill and Tennessee Williams. In addition to acclaimed productions of the best in operetta and musical theatre, it has also showcased—and in many cases premièred—works by outstanding Canadian and other contemporary playwrights.

Its artists have included the finest actors, directors and designers in Canada, as well as many from abroad. Among the internationally renowned performers who have graced its stages are Alan Bates, Brian Bedford, Douglas Campbell, Len Cariou, Brent Carver, Hume Cronyn, Brian Dennehy, Colm Feore, Megan Follows, Lorne Greene, Paul Gross, Uta Hagen, Julie Harris, Martha Henry, William Hutt, James Mason, Eric McCormack, Loreena McKennitt, Richard Monette, John Neville, Nicholas Pennell, Christopher Plummer, Sarah Polley, Douglas Rain, Kate Reid, Jason Robards, Paul Scofield, William Shatner, Maggie Smith, Jessica Tandy, Peter Ustinov and Al Waxman.

Drawing audiences of more than 400,000 each year, the Festival season now runs from April to November, with productions being presented in four unique theatres. It offers an extensive program of educational and enrichment activities for students, teachers and other patrons, and operates its own in-house school of professional artist development: The Birmingham Conservatory for Classical Theatre.

Stratford Festival performances take place in four distinct stages:

- **Festival Theatre**
- **Avon Theatre**
- **Tom Patterson Theatre**
- **Studio Theatre**

THE PLAYWRIGHT:
WILLIAM
SHAKESPEARE

Born in Stratford-upon-Avon, a small Warwickshire town, in 1564, William Shakespeare was the eldest son of John Shakespeare, a glover, and Mary Arden, the daughter of a wealthy farmer. The exact date of his birth is unknown, but baptismal records point to it being the same as that of his death, April 23. He probably attended what is now the Edward VI Grammar School, where he would have studied Latin literature, and at 18, he married a farmer’s daughter, Anne Hathaway, with whom he had three children: Susanna, born in 1583, and, two years later, the twins Hamnet (who died in childhood) and Judith.

Nothing further is known of his life until 1592, when his earliest known play, the first part of Henry VI, became a hit in London, where Shakespeare was now working as an actor. Soon afterwards, an outbreak of the plague forced the temporary closure of the theatres, and Shakespeare turned for a while to writing poetry. By 1594, however, he was back in the theatre, acting with the Lord Chamberlain’s Men. He quickly established himself as one of London’s most successful dramatists, with an income that enabled him, in 1597, to buy a mansion back in Stratford. In 1599 he became a shareholder in London’s newly built Globe Theatre.

In 1603, Shakespeare’s company was awarded a royal patent, becoming known as the King’s Men. Possibly as early as 1610, the playwright retired to his home in Stratford-upon-Avon, living there – and continuing to invest in real estate – until his death on April 23, 1616. He is buried in the town’s Holy Trinity Church.

In the first collected edition of his works in 1623, fellow dramatist Ben Jonson called him a man “not of an age, but for all time”. Not only did Shakespeare write some of the most popular plays of all time, but he was a very prolific writer, writing 38 (canonically accepted) works in 23 years. His work covered many subjects and styles, including comedies, tragedies, histories and romances, all bearing his hallmark expansive plots, extraordinary language and humanist themes. Shakespeare enjoyed great popularity in his lifetime, and 400 years later, he is still the most produced playwright in the world.
ABOUT HAMLET

A SHAKESPEAREAN TIMELINE

1558  Elizabeth I crowned.
1564  William Shakespeare born.
1572  Actors not under the protection of a patron declared rogues and vagabonds.
1578  James VI (later James I of England) takes over government of Scotland.
1579  Publication of North’s English translation of Plutarch’s Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans.
1580  Francis Drake returns in triumph form his voyage around the world; travelling players perform at Stratford.
1582  Shakespeare marries Anne Hathaway; Susanna is born six months later and the twins Hamnet and Judith in 1585.
1587  “The Rose” theatre opens in London. Mary Queen of Scots is executed.
1588  Spanish Armada defeated.
1589  Shakespeare finds work as an actor in London; he lives apart from his wife for 21 years.
1590-1591  The Two Gentlemen of Verona, The Taming of the Shrew.
1591  2 Henry VI, 3 Henry VI.
1592 Thousands die of plague in London; theatres closed. *1 Henry VI, Titus Andronicus, Richard III.*

1593 *The Comedy of Errors.*

1594 Shakespeare becomes a shareholder of his theatre company, The Lord Chamberlain’s Men.

1594 *Love’s Labour’s Lost.*

1595 *Richard II, Romeo and Juliet, A Midsummer Night’s Dream.*

1596 Shakespeare’s son, Hamnet, dies.

1596-1597 *King John, The Merchant of Venice, 1 Henry IV.*

1597-1598 *The Merry Wives of Windsor, 2 Henry IV, Much Ado About Nothing.*


1598-1599 *Henry V, Julius Caesar.*

1599-1600 *As You Like It.*

1600-1601 **Hamlet, Twelfth Night.**

1601 Shakespeare’s patron arrested for treason following the Essex rebellion; he is later pardoned.

1602 *Troilus and Cressida.*

1603 Queen Elizabeth dies and is succeeded by James I; Shakespeare’s theatre company becomes the King’s Men.

1603 *Measure for Measure, Othello.*

1604 Work begins on the King James bible.

1604-1605 *All’s Well That Ends Well, Timon of Athens, King Lear (Q).*

1606 *Macbeth, Antony and Cleopatra.*

1607 *Pericles, Prince of Tyre.*

1608 *Coriolanus.*

1609 *The Winter’s Tale.*

1610 *King Lear (F), Cymbeline.*

1610 Shakespeare retires to Stratford-upon-Avon.

1611 *The Tempest.*

1611 King James version of the bible published.

1613 *Henry VIII (All is True), The Two Noble Kinsmen.*

1613 “The Globe” theatre burns down.

1616 Shakespeare dies in Stratford-upon-Avon.

1623 The first folio of Shakespeare’s collected plays is published.

* some dates are approximate
ABOUT HAMLET

CAST OF CHARACTERS

The Royal House of Denmark

HAMLET, Prince of Denmark
CLAUDIUS, King of Denmark, Hamlet’s uncle
GERTRUDE, Queen of Denmark, Hamlet’s mother
GHOST OF King Hamlet, Hamlet’s father

The Court of Denmark

POLONIUS, Counsellor to the King
OPHELIA, his daughter
LAERTES, his son
REYNALDO, his servant

OSRIC
LORDS
GENTLEMAN
MESSENGER and ATTENDANTS

Courtiers

Ambassadors to Norway
Officers of the Watch

VOLTEMAND
CORNELIUS
MARCELLUS
BERNARDO
FRANCISCO
SOLDIERS and GUARDS

Former Schoolfellows of Hamlet

HORATIO, Hamlet’s friend
ROSENCRANTZ
GUILDENSTERN sent for by Claudius to spy on Hamlet

Norway

FORTINBRAS, Prince of Norway
CAPTAIN, in his army

Other Characters

First Player
Other Players acting troupe visiting Elsinore
English Ambassadors
Sailors
Clown, gravedigger and sexton
Second Clown, his assistant
Priest, at Ophelia’s funeral

Setting In and around Elsinore and the Danish royal palace.
ABOUT HAMLET

SYNOPSIS OF THE PLOT

Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, is in mourning for his dead father, the king. He’s also disturbed by how quickly his mother, Gertrude, has remarried – and by the fact that her new spouse is Claudius, her late husband’s brother (and thus Hamlet’s uncle).

Hamlet’s disgust at this incestuous union, which has also robbed him of his succession to the throne, turns to fury when his father’s ghost appears and reveals that he was murdered by Claudius. Vowing revenge, Hamlet decides to feign madness until an opportunity presents itself. Polonius, the lord chamberlain, thinks that Hamlet’s strange behaviour springs from love for his daughter, Ophelia, but Claudius soon begins to suspect otherwise.

The arrival of a travelling theatre company gives Hamlet the idea of re-enacting his father’s murder to startle Claudius into revealing his guilt. Claudius is indeed shocked by the performance, but Hamlet’s triumph is short-lived; while arguing with his mother in her bedroom, he stabs an eavesdropper hiding behind a curtain, only to discover that it is Polonius he has killed, not Claudius.

Claudius sends Hamlet to England, secretly intending to have him put to death there. Meanwhile, Ophelia, driven mad by grief, commits suicide. Hamlet escapes, however, and returns to Denmark, whereupon Claudius urges Laertes to challenge him to a fencing match, in which Laertes will secretly poison the tip of his sword. But when both combatants receive mortal wounds, the dying Laertes reveals the plot, whereupon Hamlet kills Claudius before succumbing to his own inevitable fate.

Connect with Stratford: For further exploration and interactive activities check out the following:
- The Forum, a series of remarkable events to enrich the play-going experience: www.stratfordfestival.ca/forum/.
- Stratford Festival’s YouTube channel for behind-the-scenes videos, photos and interviews: www.youtube.com/user/stratfordfestival
ABOUT HAMLET

SOURCES AND ORIGINS

Hamlet was likely derived from Vita Amlethi, the legendary story of a Danish prince that was contained in Gesta Danorum, a book of Danish history written by Saxo Grammaticus in the 12th century and translated into French by François de Belleforest in the 16th century. Versions of the basic story are found in Byzantine, Greek and Roman myths.

Based on oral traditions, Amleth tells the story of Jutland’s king, Rorik (an historical figure), who marries his daughter Gerutha to his favourite noble, Horwendil. They have a son named Amleth. Horwendil’s brother Feng murders Horwendil and marries Gerutha himself. In order to save himself, Amleth pretends to be witless, although Feng is suspicious and sends him off to England with two trusted retainers. The retainers bear a letter carrying a death sentence for the prince. Before they arrive in England, Amleth finds the letter, erases the original writing and changes it to be a death sentence for the retainers, a punishment that the English king carries out. Amleth marries the king’s daughter but leaves her behind as he returns to Jutland, murders his uncle and burns down the great hall.

Although Shakespeare clearly based his story on this early legend, he does not follow through with Amleth’s fate as described in the Gesta Danorum. In the Danish story, Amleth returns to England where his father-in-law is distressed to learn that Amleth has killed Feng; he had sworn to avenge Feng’s murder if it should occur. In order to avoid killing Amleth outright, he sends him to Scotland to woo, on the king’s behalf, the Scottish Queen Hermutruide, who had a nasty habit of killing all her suitors. Amleth wins her over, however, and takes her as his second wife. He returns south, kills the king and sails back to Jutland with both his English and Scottish wives. Sadly, before becoming king, he is slain in battle.

There has long been speculation that a version of Hamlet, possibly written by Thomas Kyd, may have been performed by the Chamberlain’s Men. Although lost, this “Ur-Hamlet” as it is known, may have been re-written by Shakespeare. However, with no evidence that the earlier version of the play actually existed, there is no way to determine whether Shakespeare knew of it or adapted it for his own play.

STAGE HISTORY

Hamlet was likely written between 1599 and 1602; we know that the play was presented by the Lord Chamberlain’s Men in 1602.

It appears in three published versions, the First Quarto (1603), a Second Quarto (1604) and then in the First Folio (1623). The First Quarto, sometimes referred to as the “Bad” Quarto, contains only about half the text of the Second Quarto.

Ship’s records of the Red Dragon, a flagship of the East India Company, report that both Hamlet and Richard II were performed by the crew during a voyage to Java in 1607. In 1619, it was performed for King James I; in 1637, Charles I was in the audience.

By the mid-18th century, Hamlet was being adapted and played around the world with performances in Russia (1748) and its first-known American performance in Philadelphia.
The great English actress Sarah Siddons is the first known female Hamlet, playing the role nine times between 1775 and 1805.

In the first half of the 19th century, English actors toured the United States; among them was Junius Brutus Booth (father of James Wilkes Booth and one of the great American Hamlets of his time, Edwin Booth).

The 20th century saw an explosion of international adaptations of the play including, in 1911, a Japanese production in Kabuki style. That same year, Constantin Stanislavski presented the play in Russia. John Barrymore starred at London’s Haymarket in 1925; in the early 1930s, John Gielgud played the Prince in New York.

In 1937, Laurence Olivier performed the title role at the Old Vic. That same year, the play was staged at Elsinore in Denmark with Olivier and his wife Vivien Leigh (Ophelia). This production was directed by Tyrone Guthrie.

In 1938, Maurice Evans’ production was the first to present the uncut play to Broadway audiences; it ran for more than four-and-a-half hours. He later presented a much shorter version that he toured throughout the South Pacific to allied bases during World War II.

When Britain’s National Theatre opened in 1963, Olivier directed Peter O’Toole at its inaugural performance.

Notable performers of the role in New York include Richard Burton, who was nominated for a Tony Award in 1964 in a production directed by John Gielgud. In 1995, Ralph Fiennes won a Tony for the role.

Recent productions of the play have featured Simon Russell Beale, David Tennant, and Jude Law.

In celebration of Shakespeare’s 450th birthday, the Globe Theatre has undertaken a two-year international tour of Hamlet with the goal of performing the play in every country in the world. To learn more about the initiative, go to globetoglobe.shakespearesglobe.com/hamlet

**OTHER PERSPECTIVES**

The first film adaptation was a five-minute fencing scene that featured actress Sarah Bernhardt as Hamlet (1900). Between 1907 and 1920, six silent-film versions were released.

In 1948, Laurence Olivier’s Hamlet, filmed at Elsinore in Denmark, won him his first Best Actor Academy Award in a film that also was awarded the Best Picture Oscar. In what some believe is the greatest filmed version of the play (1964), Innokenti Smoktunovsky played Hamlet in a Russian movie released as Gamlet. Later that same year, John Gielgud’s production featuring Richard Burton was also released.

Other film versions featured Nicol Williamson and Marianne Faithfull (Ophelia) in 1969; Mel Gibson and Glenn Close (Gertrude) in a Franco Zeffirelli production (1990); Kenneth Branagh and Kate Winslett (Ophelia) in 1996; and Ethan Hawke in a production set in contemporary Manhattan (2000).
The play has been filmed for television many times featuring Christopher Plummer (1964), Richard Chamberlain (1970), Derek Jacobi (1980), Kevin Kline (1990), Campbell Scott (2000) and David Tennant (2009).

The plot and characters of Hamlet have been used as the basis for other art forms including dance, opera and literature.

Tom Stoppard’s Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead (1966) was produced at Stratford in 1986. Directed by John Wood, it featured Brent Carver (Hamlet), Lucy Peacock (Ophelia), Elizabeth Shepherd (Gertrude), James Blendick (Claudius), William Dunlop (Rosencrantz) and Keith Dinicol (Guildenstern).

Numerous choreographers have adapted the play for the ballet including Robert Helpmann (1942), Stephen Mills with music by Philip Glass (2000) and Kevin O’Day (2008).

In 1868, French composer Ambroise Thomas wrote an opera that is still performed internationally.

Walt Disney Pictures released The Lion King in 1994 with a storyline inspired by the play; the film was later adapted into a hit stage musical.
STRATFORD FESTIVAL
PRODUCTION HISTORY

1957: Festival Theatre. Directed by Michael Langham and designed by Desmond Heeley. The production featured Christopher Plummer (Hamlet), Frances Hyland (Ophelia), Douglas Campbell (Claudius), Joy Lafleur (Gertrude), William Hutt (Polonius), Michael Kane (Laertes), Lloyd Bochner (Horatio), Neil Vipond (Rosencrantz) and Ted Follows (Guildenstern). Music by Louis Applebaum. Tom Brown was the choreographer.

**FUN FACT:** Michael Kane (Laertes) was hired to replace William Shatner who, the Ottawa Citizen reported in May 1957 “has been released from the Festival to take a leading role in a new Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer movie.”

1969: Festival Theatre. Directed by John Hirsch and designed by Sam Kirkpatrick. The production featured Kenneth Welsh (Hamlet), Anne Anglin (Ophelia), Leo Ciceri (Claudius), Angela Wood (Gertrude), Powys Thomas (Polonius), Neil Dainard (Laertes), James Blendick (Horatio), Stephen Markle (Rosencrantz) and Peter Scupham (Guildenstern). Music by Louis Applebaum. Patrick Crean was the fight arranger.

1969 (Tour): Studebaker Theater (Chicago), Mendelssohn Theater (Ann Arbor) and Theatre Maisonneuve (Montreal). Directed by John Hirsch and designed by Sam Kirkpatrick. The production featured Kenneth Welsh (Hamlet), Anne Anglin (Ophelia), Leo Ciceri (Claudius), Angela Wood (Gertrude), Powys Thomas (Polonius), Neil Dainard (Laertes), James Blendick (Horatio), John Innes (Rosencrantz) and Peter Scupham (Guildenstern). Music by Louis Applebaum. John Gleason was the lighting designer.

1969 (Tour): National Arts Centre (Ottawa). Directed by John Hirsch and restaged by Keith Turnbull. Designed by Sam Kirkpatrick. The production featured Kenneth Welsh (Hamlet), Anne Anglin (Ophelia), Leo Ciceri (Claudius), Angela Wood (Gertrude), Powys Thomas (Polonius), Leon Pownall (Laertes), James Blendick (Horatio), Stephen Markle (Rosencrantz) and Peter Scupham (Guildenstern). Music by Louis Applebaum. Patrick Crean was the fight arranger.

1976: Avon Theatre. Directed by Robin Phillips and William Hutt. John Pennoyer was the designer; basic set design by Daphne Dare. The production featured Richard Monette and Nicholas Pennell (Hamlet), Marti Maraden (Ophelia), Michael Liscinsky (Claudius), Patricia Bentley-Fisher and Pat Galloway (Gertrude), Eric Donkin (Polonius), Richard Partington (Laertes), Stephen Russell (Horatio), Robert More (Rosencrantz) and Paul Batten (Guildenstern). Music by Berthold Carrière. Gil Wechsler was the lighting designer and Patrick Crean was the fight arranger.

1976 (Tour): Grand Theatre (Kingston), Place des Arts (Montreal) and National Arts Centre (Ottawa). Directed by Robin Phillips and William Hutt. John Pennoyer was the designer; basic set design by Daphne Dare. The production featured Richard Monette and Nicholas Pennell (Hamlet), Marti Maraden (Ophelia), Michael Liscinsky (Claudius), Patricia Bentley-Fisher and Pat Galloway (Gertrude), Eric Donkin (Polonius), Richard Partington (Laertes), Stephen Russell (Horatio), Robert More (Rosencrantz) and Paul Batten (Guildenstern).
Music by Berthold Carrière. Gil Wechsler was the lighting designer and Patrick Crean was the fight arranger.

1986: Avon Theatre. Directed by John Neville and designed by Sue LePage. The production featured Brent Carver (Hamlet), Lucy Peacock (Ophelia), James Blendick (Claudius), Elizabeth Shepherd (Gertrude), Richard Curnock (Polonius), Scott Wentworth (Laertes), Lorne Kennedy (Horatio), Keith Dinicol (Rosencrantz) and William Dunlop (Guildenstern). Music by Alan Laing. Louise Guinand was the lighting designer and Jean-Pierre Fournier was the fight arranger.

1991: Festival Theatre. Directed by David William and designed by Debra Hanson. The production featured Colm Feore (Hamlet), Sidonie Boll (Ophelia), Leon Pownall (Claudius), Patricia Collins (Gertrude), Edward Atienza (Polonius), Bradley C. Rudy (Laertes), Wayne Best (Horatio), Paul Miller (Rosencrantz) and Tim McDonald (Guildenstern). Music by Louis Applebaum. Harry Frehner was the lighting designer and John Stead was the fight director. Movement by John Broome.

1994: Tom Patterson Theatre. Directed by Richard Monette. William Hutt was the Consultant Director, Antoni Cimolino was the assistant director and Debra Hanson was the designer. The production featured Stephen Ouimette (Hamlet), Sabrina Grdevich (Ophelia), Peter Donaldson (Claudius), Janet Wright (Gertrude), Douglas Rain (Polonius), Antoni Cimolino (Laertes), Tom McCamus (Horatio), Kevin Bundy (Rosencrantz) and Jonathan Crombie (Guildenstern). Music by Louis Applebaum. Sound by Louis Applebaum and Evan Turner. Kevin Fraser was the lighting designer and John Stead was the fight arranger.

2000: Festival Theatre. Directed by Joseph Ziegler. Timothy Askew was the assistant director and Christina Poddubiuk was the designer. The production featured Paul Gross (Hamlet), Marion Day (Ophelia), Benedict Campbell (Claudius), Domini Blythe (Gertrude), Jerry Franken (Polonius), Graham Abbey (Laertes), David Keeley (Horatio), Evan Buliung (Rosencrantz) and David Kirby (Guildenstern). Laura Burton was the composer, Louise Guinand was the lighting designer, Jim Neil was the sound designer, John Broome was the choreographer and John Stead was the fight director.

2008: Festival Theatre. Directed by Adrian Noble and designed by Santo Loquasto. The production featured Ben Carlson (Hamlet), Adrienne Gould (Ophelia), Scott Wentworth (Claudius), Maria Ricossa (Gertrude), Geraint Wyn Davies (Polonius), Bruce Godfree (Laertes), Tom Rooney (Horatio), David Leyshon (Rosencrantz) and Patrick McManus (Guildenstern). Claudio Vena was the composer, Michael Walton was the lighting designer, Todd Charlton was the sound designer, Nicola Pantin was the choreographer and John Stead was the fight director.
ABOUT *Hamlet*

**2015 Stratford Festival Production**

May 5 to October 11 – opens May 25

**Director**  
Antoni Cimolino

**Designer**  
Teresa Przybylski

**Lighting Designer**  
Michael Walton

**Composer**  
Steven Page

**Sound Designer**  
Thomas Ryder Payne

**Fight Director**  
John Stead

**Movement Director**  
Shona Morris

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**Cast**

**Hamlet**  
Jonathan Goad

**Gertrude**  
Seana McKenna

**Claudius/The Ghost**  
Geraint Wyn Davies

**Horatio**  
Tim Campbell

**Ophelia**  
Adrienne Gould

**Polonius**  
Tom Rooney

**Laertes**  
Mike Shara

**Player Queen**  
Sarah Afful

**Player King**  
Juan Chioran

**Gentlewoman**  
Ijeoma Emesowum

**Fortinbras Captain**  
Xuan Fraser

**Messenger**  
Josh Johnston

**Gravedigger #1**  
Robert King

**Marcellus, Fortinbras**  
John Kirkpatrick

**Player, Court Lady**  
Shruti Kothari

**Francisco, Sailor**  
Josue Laboucane

**Prologue**  
Tiffany Claire Martin

**Reynaldo**  
Jennifer Mogbock

**Lucianus, Priest**  
Derek Moran

**Oscir**  
Mike Nadajewski

**Voltemand**  
Thomas Olajide

**Cornelius**  
Andrew Robinson

**Guildenstern**  
Steve Ross

**Barnardo**  
Brad Rudy

**Rosencrantz**  
Sanjay Talwar

**English Ambassador, Gravedigger #2**  
Brian Tree
Imaginative Ways to Approach the Text

**HAMLET – ADVICE FROM POLONIUS**

**Lesson Overview:**
In this lesson, the students will deconstruct Polonius’ speech with a focus on analysing and communicating the meaning of the work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Level(s)</th>
<th>7-12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subject Area(s)</td>
<td>English, Drama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum Expectations &amp; Learning Outcomes</td>
<td>By the end of the lesson students will be able to:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ Explain how the activity provides insight into different types of roles with a range of perspectives on social interaction and power relationships;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ Evaluate the effectiveness of a speech and the language of persuasion;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ Analyse a dramatic work to determine how it communicates ideas.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Needed</td>
<td>1 class period</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Space</td>
<td>Desks in groups, then open spaces for exploring the text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials</td>
<td>Handout: Student Worksheets – Advice from Polonius</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**For the Teacher**

**Brainstorm:**
♦ Ask the class the following:

1. What is the best advice you ever received? Why?
2. What is the worst advice you ever received? Why?
3. What do you look for if you were asked to create the perfect piece of advice?

**The Activity:**
♦ Distribute to the class the student worksheets and read together the full text or play a recording of the speech, while they follow the text.
♦ Divide the class into groups of four.
♦ In groups have them read each piece of advice aloud (#1 – 8). Circulate and ensure they understand the meaning of the words and phrases.
♦ The groups will brainstorm and write in their own words what each sentence is about.
♦ When they have finished, have the students read aloud what they’ve written, ensuring that each person in the group reads a section.
♦ Have the students go back to Shakespeare’s original text and have them read aloud, again ensuring all students are involved.
♦ Repeat, this time have each group stand in a circle. As each student reads his/her section, encourage him/her to make eye-contact with someone in the circle as if s/he is giving them advice.
Debrief:

- Ask the class the following or have them write a one-page response to any of these questions:
  - What did you discover about the relationship between Polonius and Laertes?
  - Do you think Polonius is sincere or smug?
  - When you re-wrote the Polonius’ words and phrases using contemporary English, did you find the speech as evocative and as effective as Shakespeare’s?

Optional Writing Assignment:

- If you were Laertes writing to your best buddy about the chat you just had with your dad, what would you tell him/her?
STUDENT WORKSHEETS – ADVICE FROM POLONIUS, Act I, scene 3

Laertes is about to leave for France and Polonius gives his son some fatherly advice.

1. Read together the full text.
2. In groups read each piece of advice aloud (see next page #’s 1 - 8). Make sure you understand the meaning of the words and phrases.
3. Brainstorm with your group and write in your own words what each sentence is about.
4. Read aloud what you’ve written, each person taking a section.
5. Now go back to Shakespeare’s original text and read it aloud with each person taking a section.
6. Stand in a small circle and read your section of Shakespeare’s text to the group. Try to make eye-contact with someone in the circle as if you are giving them advice.

Yet here, Laertes? Aboard, aboard, for shame!
The wind sits in the shoulder of your sail,
And you are stayed for. There, my blessing with thee,
And these few precepts in thy memory
Look thou character. Give thy thoughts no tongue,
Nor any unproportioned thought his act.
Be thou familiar, but by no means vulgar.
Those friends thou hast, and their adoption tried,
Grapple them to thy soul with hoops of steel,
But do not dull thy palm with entertainment
Of each new-hatched, unfledged courage. Beware
Of entrance to a quarrel, but being in,
Bear't that the opposèd may beware of thee.
Give every man thy ear, but few thy voice;
Take each man's censure, but reserve thy judgment.
Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy,
But not expressed in fancy; rich, not gaudy;
For the apparel oft proclaims the man,
And they in France of the best rank and station
Are of a most select and generous chief in that.
Neither a borrower nor a lender be,
For loan oft loses both itself and friend,
And borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry.
This above all, to thine own self be true,
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man.
Farewell, my blessing season this in thee!
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Polonius' Words</th>
<th>In Your Own Words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Give thy thoughts no tongue, Nor any unproportioned thought his act.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Be thou familiar, but by no means vulgar.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Those friends thou hast, and their adoption tried, Grapple them to thy soul with hoops of steel, But do not dull thy palm with entertainment Of each new-hatched, unfledged comrade.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Of entrance to a quarrel, but being in, Bear't that the opposed may beware of thee.</td>
<td>Beware</td>
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<td>Give every man thy ear, but few thy voice; Take each man's censure, but reserve thy judgment.</td>
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<td>Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy, But not expressed in fancy: rich, not gaudy; For the apparel oft proclaims the man, And they in France of the best rank and station Are of a most select and generous chief in that.</td>
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Imaginative Ways to Approach the Text

HAMLET – TO BE, OR NOT TO BE... - A PUZZLING QUESTION

Lesson Overview:
In this lesson, the students will delve into Hamlet’s soliloquy to de-code the text for meaning and insights and challenge them to think creatively.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subject Area(s)</td>
<td>English, Drama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum Expectations &amp; Learning Outcomes</td>
<td>By the end of the lesson students will be able to:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Describe different approaches used to explore the text’s concepts and themes;</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Analyse the text focusing on the ways in which they communicate information, ideas and influence the listener’s response;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Make meaningful connections between themselves and what they encounter in the text and the world around them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Needed</td>
<td>1-2 class periods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Space</td>
<td>Desks in groups, then open spaces for exploring the text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials</td>
<td>Handout: Student Worksheet – Hamlet’s “To be, ...” Soliloquy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the Teacher

Brainstorm:
♦ Ask the class the following:
  o Think about a situation recently where you were attempting to do something but it failed, or something happened that made you feel frustrated and angry.
  Options—
  o [If the students don’t want to share their thoughts with you or the rest of the class, have them do this assignment.] Write about this experience and how you felt for one minute, non-stop. If you get stuck write, “I felt...,” as a prompt to help you.
  o [If you want students to discuss this in class, have them work in pairs and do this assignment.] Find a partner and share your story with your classmate.

The Activity:
♦ Read the “To be, or not to be...” soliloquy or play an audio recording for the class to hear.
♦ Discuss what they heard and what they thought it was about.
♦ Divide the class into 6 groups. Place numbers 1 to 6 in a hat and have a representative from each group come up and retrieve a number. Distribute the “Student Worksheet” handouts to the students and let the students know that the number they have been given represents the numbered section of the soliloquy that they will be working on, going through the activity step-by-step.
STEP 1:
♦ Each group will read their section 2 to 3 times and, using the glossary, discuss the meaning of the words and phrases.

STEP 2:
♦ One person starts reading and every time there is any kind of punctuation mark, switch reader, and so on.

Questions—
  o What did you discover about this section of the soliloquy?
  o What is your reaction to Hamlet’s thought process so far?

STEP 3:
♦ The students will read their section again and mark where they think Hamlet has a change of thought, a realization, a decision, or something else they may have noticed.
♦ Have them write a title for every section that sums up what they think it is about.

STEP 4:
♦ The students will re-write their section using contemporary English.

PAUSE AND REVIEW:
♦ Have the students check out the following:

  **BREAKING DOWN THE SPEECH**

**LOOK** at the whole speech:
⇒ How many lines are in this speech?
⇒ How many separate thoughts are in this soliloquy (Clue: each thought finishes with an end-stop punctuation of either a period, exclamation mark or question.).
⇒ How many of the thoughts end mid-line?
⇒ How many of the thoughts are questions?
⇒ Glance at the end of each thought – does it tell you what the speech is about?

**Use these to further analyze the speech:**
✓ Speeches with many thoughts signify a mind that moves quickly.
✓ Speeches with longer thoughts shows a mind more settled.
✓ Speeches with mid-line endings indicate a frantic mind, switching from subject-to-subject, almost as if they were interrupting themselves.
Food for Thought!

Consider the following statement:

“Hamlet’s speeches can be seen as a series of one-sided discussions with his best friend, the audience.…

To be, or not to be… The meaning of those six words, those simple monosyllabic sounds, has caused an enormous theatrical and academic debate. To be is positive, not to be is negative. It’s 1 or 0, life or death, Heaven or Hell, action or passivity….Is Hamlet considering suicide?....

Some read the speech as indecision over whether to kill Claudius or not, using the notion of life or death, or being and not being as a starting point (Claudius is, after all listening behind the arras – how much of this speech does he hear?).

Others link it to the previous Rogue and peasant slave soliloquy where Hamlet questions Am I a coward?, as later in this speech he tells the audience that conscience doth make cowards of us all...In other words, having heard the audience silently call him a coward, he returns with his reasons for not having sought his revenge, explaining that if the audience thought about life, death and mortality the way he did, they would equally be thought of as cowards....

Hamlet’s main concern seems to be the question of what happens to us after death. If he kills Claudius, and it turns out the new King is innocent of Old Hamlet’s death, then Hamlet’s revenge is a sin, cold-blooded murder, and if there is a Heaven and Hell, then he isn’t going to meet any angels.

If we, the audience, thought about life and death, mortality, had intelligence and conscience like Hamlet, and were fascinated by existential philosophy – well, it would make cowards of us, too.”

Ben Crystal, Hamlet: Before/During/After, Arden Shakespeare, Springboard Shakespeare, 2013, pp119-120.

STEP 5:
♦ Each group will dramatize their section with movement/physicality but not use any words (i.e. mime, or tableaux).

   Question~
   o What did you discover when you physicalized this?

♦ Each group will then act out their section using their own contemporary words they created. This can be done as a choral piece spoken together, or each student gets a section, etc.

   Question~
   o What did you discover when you put it in your own words?

♦ Each group will act out their section, this time using Shakespeare’s words.

   Question~
   o What did you discover when you used Shakespeare’s words?
**STEP 6:**
- Have the class stand in a circle in numerical order with each group clearly clumped together.
- Have each group present once through their section of the soliloquy to the whole class.
- Repeat again and this time, as soon as one group finishes, the next group begins (only group 4 may wait to enter for 2 beats to complete the iambic pentameter).

**Questions**—
- What did you “hear” and discover as you did this activity?
- What do you think worked or should be added to the soliloquy?
- What clues did you find in the text that helped you stage your section?
- What did you discover about Hamlet?

**Optional Written Assignment:**
- Have the students write a 1-page advice on or opinion column to Hamlet. Have them use particular passages from the text to support their advice or opinion(s).
To be, or not to be: that is the question -
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them. To die, to sleep -
No more; and by a sleep to say we end
The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to - 'tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wished. To die, to sleep -
To sleep, perchance to dream. Ay, there's the rub,
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
Must give us pause. There's the respect
That makes calamity of so long life,
For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
The pangs of disprized love, the law's delay,
The insolence of office, and the spurns
That patient merit of th' unworthy takes,
When he himself might his quietus make
With a bare bodkin? Who would fardels bear,
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,
But that the dread of something after death,
The undiscovered country from whose bourn
No traveller returns, puzzles the will,
And makes us rather bear those ills we have
Than fly to others that we know not of?
Thus conscience does make cowards of us all,
And thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,
And enterprises of great pith and moment
With this regard their currents turn awry,
And lose the name of action.
# Hamlet's Soliloquy in Six Easy Steps!

*Each group will focus on their assigned section.*

*Read and follow the instructions in the guided STEPS.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grp</th>
<th>Section of the Soliloquy</th>
<th>Glossary &amp; Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td>To be, or not to be: that is the question - Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, Or to take arms against a sea of troubles, And by opposing end them.</td>
<td>slings - hurled missiles outrageous - excessively wicked, violent, cruel arms - weapons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td>To die, to sleep - No more; and by a sleep to say we end The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks That flesh is heir to - 'tis a consummation Devoutly to be wished.</td>
<td>shocks - violent blows; clashes with enemy is heir to – inherits, experiences consummation - ending</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3A</strong></td>
<td>To die, to sleep - To sleep, perchance to dream.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3B</strong></td>
<td>For in that sleep of death what dreams may come, When we have shuffled off this mortal coil, Must give us pause.</td>
<td>rub – obstacle shuffled – cast off mortal coil – earth died pause – pause for thought or ending</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4</strong></td>
<td>** There’s the respect That makes calamity of so long life, For who would bear the whips and scorns of time, The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely, The pangs of disprized love, the law’s delay, The insolence of office, and the spurns That patient merit of th’ unworthy takes, When he himself might his quietus make With a bare bodkin? **</td>
<td>**- wait two beats before beginning in order to complete the iambic pentameter started on the last line of 3B respect – aspect, consideration so long life – continue for so long whips and scorns – the hurts proud – poor contumely – humiliating insults disprized – unvalued office – people in authority spurns – kicks patient merit of th’ unworthy takes – merit often goes unrecognized by unworthy people quietus – release of death bare bodkin – mere/unsheathed dagger</td>
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| 5 | Who would **fardels** bear,  
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,  
But that the dread of something after death,  
The undiscovered country from whose **bourn**  
No traveller returns, **puzzles** the will,  
And makes us rather bear those ills we have  
Than fly to others that we know not of? |

| 6 | Thus **conscience** does make cowards of us all,  
And thus the **native hue of resolution**  
Is **sicklied o’er** with the pale **cast** of thought,  
And enterprises **of great pith and moment**  
With this regard their currents turn **awry**,  
And lose the name of action. |
STEP 1:
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Questions~
  o What did you discover about this section of the soliloquy?
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STEP 3:
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☐ Write a title for every section that sums up what you think it is about.

STEP 4:
☐ Re-write your section using contemporary English.

PAUSE AND REVIEW:
☐ Check out the following:

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LOOK at the whole speech:
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Ben Crystal, Hamlet: Before/During/After, Arden Shakespeare, Springboard Shakespeare, 2013, pp119-120.

STEP 5:

☐ Dramatize your section with movement/physicality but do not use any words (i.e. mime, or tableaux).

Question~

☐ What did you discover when you physicalized this?

☐ Act out your section using your own contemporary words you have created. This can be done as a choral piece, spoken together, or each student gets a section, etc.
Question~
  o  What did you discover when you put it in your own words?

☐ Act out your section, this time using Shakespeare’s words.

Question~
  o  What did you discover when you used Shakespeare’s words?

STEP 6:
  ☐ Stand in a circle in numerical order with your group clearly clumped together.
  ☐ Perform your section of the soliloquy to the whole class.
  ☐ Repeat again and this time, as soon as one group finishes, the next group begins (only group 4 may wait to enter for 2 beats to complete the iambic pentameter).

Questions~
  o  What did you “hear” and discover as you did this activity?

  o  What do you think worked or should be added to the soliloquy?

  o  What clues did you find in the text that helped you stage your section?

  o  What did you discover about Hamlet?
**Hamlet**

-- Staging a Large Scene or Mining the Text for Clues

**Lesson Overview:**
In this lesson, the students will use their analytical and critical-thinking skills to look for staging clues in Shakespeare’s text and explore different ways of staging the opening of Act I, scene 2.

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<thead>
<tr>
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</table>
| **Curriculum Expectations & Learning Outcomes** | By the end of the lesson students will be able to:
  - Identify the important information and ideas in the text, focusing on Shakespeare’s clues for staging;
  - Analyse the text and explain how they help communicate meaning and enhance effectiveness;
  - Use a variety of conventions to develop character and shape the action in ensemble drama presentations. |
| Time Needed | 2-3 class periods |
| Space | Desks in groups, then open spaces for exploring the text |
| Materials | Handouts: Act I scene 2 Excerpt; Worksheets: Staging on the Stratford Festival; Staging a Large Scene |

**Snapshot Activity**
- Depending on the size of your class, divide into 3 or 4 groups, ensuring that there are at least 8 or more people per group.

- Distribute the four-page handout (Act I scene 2 Excerpt) to the class and read the excerpt together.

- Have the students underline and discuss unfamiliar words and their meaning.

- Handout the Student Worksheets: Staging a Large Scene or Mining the Text for Clues and have each group study the questions and answer them as if they were the director of this scene.

- Handout ‘Staging on the Stratford Festival’ and still working as a group, have the students work out the staging of the scene, using a variety of methods.

- Their culminating assignment will be to write a blog as a courtier, recording the royal Danish court and family activities.
STUDENT WORKSHEETS:  
STAGING A LARGE SCENE OR MINING THE TEXT FOR CLUES

You are the directors of this scene, work out how you envision each character to behave and respond.

Consider the following check-list before staging the scene and discuss with your group:

You Be the Director!

**About Claudius**
- Do the people in his court respect him?
- Do they perhaps fear him?
- Is Claudius honest and self-assured? Is he a manipulator?
- Do you believe he is being sincere? Are there clues in the text that might suggest otherwise?
- Is there a reason why he uses ‘we’, ‘us’, ‘our’ to refer to his royal person?
- Is he deliberately testing Hamlet? How does he respond/react to Hamlet?

**About Gertrude**
- Where would you place Gertrude in relation to her husband, Claudius, and her son, Hamlet?

**About Ophelia**
- If you choose to present Ophelia in this scene, although she has no speaking lines, how would you portray her?
- Where would you place her on stage and what would be her reactions?

**About Hamlet**
- Hamlet does not speak for quite some time in this scene. Is he engaged in what is going on? If so, is he actively or passively listening? How alert is he to what others are saying around him? Are there clues in the text to suggest this?
- Where would you place him on stage?

**About the Court and the Scene**
- Your social status and rank at court is often denoted by where you stand in relation to the king. Look at the list of characters in this scene, who has a higher social status and where would you place them? Where would you place those of lower ranks and why?
- Study the photograph of Stratford Festival thrust stage with the accompanying stage directions. Notice the audience is on three sides and there are many entrances. Where do the characters enter from and where would you place them on stage?
- How genuine are people’s responses?
- What would their facial expression, body language and movement be like?
Some characters flatter – how would you portray their type of flattery? How far would you go as a director in portraying this?

Is this both a public and private scene or is it all public (for show), and if so, why?

Is there a shift in mood in the scene? If so, where does it happen and why?

**Mining the Text for Clues When Staging**

Look for stage direction clues in the text. Plot out on the handout which entrance you would have each character come from and where they would be placed on stage. When ready try out the following:

**Step 1 ~** With your group, mime the scene – dramatize the scene with movement but no words, assigning specific roles in your group.
- What did you discover?
- What do you think worked or should be added to the scene?

**Step 2 ~** Act out the scene, this time using your own words in contemporary English.
- What did you discover?
- What do you think worked or should be added to the scene?

**Step 3 ~** Act out the scene, using Shakespeare’s text.
- What did you discover?
- What do you think worked or should be added to the scene?

**Step 4 ~** [Optional] Each group will present their scene to the whole class.
- What did you discover in these presentations?
- What do you think worked or should be added to the scene?
- What clues did you discover in the text that helped you stage the scene?
- What did you discover about your characters?

**Written Assignment**
- You are one of the courtiers in this scene, write a blog on what took place in court, recording the activities of royal Danish family. Feel free to express your opinion of the events that unfold.
IN BRIEF: The opening of this scene immediately establishes that Claudius is in recent possession of his dead brother’s throne and has just married his sister-in-law, Gertrude. He quickly turns to political matters and how young Fortinbras of Norway is now threatening Denmark. He sends his messengers, Cornelius and Voltemand, to speak to the old King of Norway in the hopes of preventing Fortinbras from attacking Denmark. He then turns his attention to Polonius’ son, Laertes, who asks permission to return to university in France and Claudius grants it. Claudius then sets about to criticize Hamlet for continuing to grieve the death of his father and refuses him permission to return to Wittenberg University. Hamlet’s mother pleads with him to stay in Elsinore and he agrees.

The Great Hall of Elsinore Castle

Enter KING CLAUDIUS, QUEEN GERTRUDE, HAMLET, POLONIUS, LAERTES, VOLTEMAND, CORNELIUS, [possibly OPHELIA] and other Lords, and Attendants

CLAUDIUS Though yet of Hamlet our dear brother’s death
The memory be green, and that it us befitted
To bear our hearts in grief and our whole kingdom
To be contracted in one brow of woe,
Yet so far hath discretion fought with nature
That we with wisest sorrow think on him,
Together with remembrance of ourselves.
Therefore our sometime sister, now our queen,
Th’ imperial jointress to this warlike state,
Have we, as ’twere with a defeated joy,
With an auspicious and a dropping eye,
With mirth in funeral and with dirge in marriage,
In equal scale weighing delight and dole,
Taken to wife; nor have we herein barred
Your better wisdoms, which have freely gone
With this affair along - for all, our thanks.
Now follows, that you know: young Fortinbras,
Holding a weak supposal of our worth,
Or thinking by our late dear brother's death
Our state to be disjoint and out of frame,
Colleaguèd with the dream of his advantage,
He hath not fail'd to pester us with message
Importing the surrender of those lands
Lost by his father, with all bonds of law,
To our most valiant brother. So much for him.
Now for ourself and for this time of meeting
Thus much the business is: we have here writ
To Norway, uncle of young Fortinbras,
Who, impotent and bed-rid, scarcely hears
Of this his nephew's purpose, to suppress
His further gait herein, in that the levies,
The lists and full proportions, are all made
Out of his subject; and we here dispatch
You, good Cornelius, and you, Voltemand,
For bearers of this greeting to old Norway,
Giving to you no further personal power
To business with the king, more than the scope
Of these dilated articles allow.
Farewell, and let your haste commend your duty.

CORNELIUS & VOLTEMAND
In that and all things will we show our duty.

CLAUDIUS We doubt it nothing, heartily farewell.  
Exeunt VOLTEMAND and CORNELIUS
And now, Laertes, what's the news with you?
You told us of some suit; what is't Laertes?
You cannot speak of reason to the Dane
And lose your voice. What wouldst thou beg, Laertes,
That shall not be my offer, not thy asking?
The head is not more native to the heart,
The hand more instrumental to the mouth,
Than is the throne of Denmark to thy father.
What wouldst thou have Laertes?

LAERTES My dread lord,
Your leave and favour to return to France,
From whence though willingly I came to Denmark
To show my duty in your coronation,
Yet now I must confess, that duty done,
My thoughts and wishes bend again toward France,
And bow them to your gracious leave and pardon.

CLAUDIUS Have you your father's leave? What says Polonius?

POLONIUS He hath my lord wrung from me my slow leave
By laboursome petition, and at last
Upon his will I sealed my hard consent.
I do beseech you, give him leave to go.

CLAUDIUS Take thy fair hour Laertes, time be thine,
And thy best graces spend it at thy will.
But now, my cousin Hamlet, and my son –

HAMLET [Aside] A little more than kin, and less than kind.

CLAUDIUS How is it that the clouds still hang on you?
HAMLET Not so, my lord, I am too much i’ th’ sun.

GERTRUDE Good Hamlet cast thy nighted colour off,
And let thine eye look like a friend on Denmark.
Do not for ever with thy vailèd lids
Seek for thy noble father in the dust.
Thou know’st ’tis common, all that lives must die,
Passing through nature to eternity.

HAMLET Ay, madam, it is common.

GERTRUDE If it be,
Why seems it so particular with thee?

HAMLET Seems madam? nay it is, I know not 'seems.'
’Tis not alone my inky cloak, good mother,
Nor customary suits of solemn black,
Nor windy suspiration of forced breath,
No, nor the fruitful river in the eye,
Nor the dejected haviour of the visage,
Together with all forms, moods, shapes of grief,
That can denote me truly. These indeed seem,
For they are actions that a man might play,
But I have that within which passes show --
These but the trappings and the suits of woe.

CLAUDIUS ’Tis sweet and commendable in your nature Hamlet,
To give these mourning duties to your father;
But you must know, your father lost a father,
That father lost, lost his, and the survivor bound
In filial obligation for some term
To do obsequious sorrow; but to persever
In obstinate condolement is a course
Of impious stubbornness, ’tis unmanly grief,
It shows a will most incorrect to heaven,
A heart unfortified, a mind impatient,
An understanding simple and unschooled.
For what we know must be, and is as common
As any the most vulgar thing to sense,
Why should we in our peevish opposition
Take it to heart? Fie, ’tis a fault to heaven,
A fault against the dead, a fault to nature,
To reason most absurd, whose common theme
Is death of fathers, and who still hath cried,
From the first corse till he that died to-day,
’This must be so.’ We pray you, throw to earth
This unprevailing woe, and think of us
As of a father, for let the world take note
You are the most immediate to our throne,
And with no less nobility of love
Than that which dearest father bears his son,
Do I impart toward you. For your intent
In going back to school in Wittenberg,
It is most retrograde to our desire,
And we beseech you bend you to remain
Here in the cheer and comfort of our eye,
Our chiefest courtier, cousin, and our son.

GERTRUDE  Let not thy mother lose her prayers, Hamlet.
I pray thee, stay with us, go not to Wittenberg.

HAMLET  I shall in all my best obey you, madam.

CLAUDIUS  Why, 'tis a loving and a fair reply.
Be as ourself in Denmark. Madam, come.
This gentle and unforced accord of Hamlet
Sits smiling to my heart: in grace whereof,
No jocund health that Denmark drinks today
But the great cannon to the clouds shall tell,
And the king's rouse the heavens all bruit again,
Re-speaking earthly thunder. Come away.

Exeunt all but HAMLET
Festival Theatre – Stratford Festival. Designed by Tanya Moiseiwitsch.
DISCUSSION TOPICS FOR YOUR CLASS

For classes reading the play before seeing it:

1. What do you expect to see on stage at the Stratford Festival? Have each student make a list of predictions about what they expect. Save these predictions. After your Stratford trip, revisit them to see how they compared to the actual production.

2. Write in role, as either Hamlet or Ophelia, a love letter to your lover.

3. Make a story map or a story board outlining the main events of the play. (This may be used later in group activities.)

After your Stratford trip:

1. Hamlet continuously questions whether or not he should avenge his father’s death. What religious, moral and political concerns does he have that cause him much anxiety?

2. Is Hamlet’s “antic” behavior a sign of insanity or is he only putting on an appearance of being unbalanced? Discuss the inconsistencies in Hamlet’s behavior.

3. What practical purposes did the Players’ performance (the play-within-the-play) serve in the plot?

4. Which of the characters in Hamlet did you most closely identify with and why?

4. Create a character web showing how all the characters are connected to each other. Discuss the complexity of these relationships and how they affect the progression of the play.

For more classroom activities, complete with instructions, materials and Ontario curriculum expectation links, visit stratfordfestival.ca/teachingmaterials.

You can also check out the following:

- The Forum, a series of remarkable events to enrich the play-going experience: www.stratfordfestival.ca/forum/.
- Stratford Festival’s YouTube channel for behind-the-scenes videos, photos and interviews: www.youtube.com/user/stratfordfestival
- Stratford Festival’s Flickr pages: www.flickr.com/photos/stratfest/
- Stratford Festival Twitter: twitter.com/stratfest
- Stratford Festival Facebook: www.facebook.com/StratfordFestival
- Stratford Festival Behind the Scenes App.: www.stratfordfestival.ca/explore.
Resources

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY for HAMLET

SHAKESPEARE: HISTORY, CRITICISM and BIOGRAPHY:

Brown, John Russell. Shakespeare and his Theatre.
Campbell, Oscar James, ed. The Reader’s Encyclopedia of Shakespeare. 1966.
Tillyard, E. M. W. The Elizabethan World Picture. 1943.

TEACHING SHAKESPEARE:


HAMLET:


WEB RESOURCES:

Mr. William Shakespeare and the Internet, shakespeare.palomar.edu
Hamlet Online:

MIT Shakespeare: The Complete Works of William Shakespeare:
shakespeare.mit.edu/hamlet/index.html
BookRags.com Homepage: http://www.bookrags.com/studyguide-hamlet/#gsc.tab=0
SparkNotes: http://www.sparknotes.com/shakespeare/hamlet/
The Literature Network: http://www.online-literature.com/shakespeare/hamlet/
King Lear Revision: http://www.s-cool.co.uk/a-level/english-literature/hamlet

Hamlet on Film, Video and DVD:

1948 (AU-Film) Hamlet. Directed by Laurence Olivier; starring Laurence Olivier, Jean Simmons and Stanley Holloway.
1964 (US-Film) Hamlet. Directed by Bill Colleron and John Gielgud; starring Richard Burton, Hume Cronyn and John Gielgud.
1969 (UK-Film) Hamlet. Directed by Tony Richardson; starring Nicol Williamson, Anthony Hopkins and Marianne Faithfull.
1996 (UK-Film) Hamlet. Directed by Kenneth Branagh; starring Kenneth Branagh, Derek Jacobi, Kate Winslet, Julie Christie and Judi Dench.
2009 (UK-TV) Hamlet. Directed by Gregory Doran; starring David tenant, Patrick Stewart and Penny Downie.
2010 (UK-National Theatre Live) Hamlet. Directed by Nicholas Hytner; starring Rory Kinnear and Patrick Malahide.